

# **BETWEEN THE LINES**

## ***A Deeper Look...***

### **#934- HEROD: The Vicious Genius**

Herod stands, without question, as one of the great anomalies of all time. The world may never have seen his equal as designer, engineer, visionary, and builder. But the other side of his personality and character seemed absolutely amoral and without conscience. In some ways he stands as an epitome of what evil can be (and very much like Satan himself)- insane and genius mixed.

So, why should we spend time with such a paragon of evil? Because it gives us a more accurate picture of the 2nd Temple era and the world into which the Christ was born. Remember, the Gospels are not told in the background of stained glass windows. They are built in the framework of Herod and his legacy of "*Pax Romana*" in Judea and Galilee.

*National Geographic* (February 1987) brought to the average person a greater understanding and awareness of Caesarea Maritima. Masada has become notorious among many people while other sites of Herod have equally gotten a lot of press and publicity.

So, let's take an abbreviated look at one of Herod's architectural accomplishments, the fortress named after himself- **The Herodium**.

- It is a hill 7 miles south of Jerusalem and just southeast (3 miles) of Bethlehem.
- It looks like a 2,300 foot mini-volcano from a distance... the top is cut off.
- Herod defeated the remnants of the Hasmoneans there in 40 bce.
- He saw it as a prime site for self-protection and began fortress construction in 20 bce.
- It was a site of much archaeological study between 1962 and 1972.
- There are four towers (3 semi-circular and 1 round) inside the fringe of the wall.
- The outer "curtain wall" is 10 feet wide.
- The outside of the wall was camouflaged with sand and stone and debris.
- The eastern half of the "courtyard" had seating areas called *exedra*.
- There were decorations and corinthian columns for beauty within the enclosure.
- The southern side held the opulent dining room and banquet facilities.
- There was a 3 story residential complex on the western side.
- The western end also had an elaborate and luxurious bathhouse complex.
- The northern end held the palace... 175 feet by 400 feet.
- An aquaduct brought water from Solomon's pools near Bethlehem to the site.
- There was an extensive network of cisterns for storing water within the complex.
- The enclosure also house a full 1,000 foot long *hippodrome* (race track).
- Josephus speaks of the funeral procession of Herod approaching The Herodium.
- During (and after) the siege of 70 ce it was one of three resistance strongholds.
- It served again as a defense site during the Bar-Kokhba rebellion of 132-135 ce.

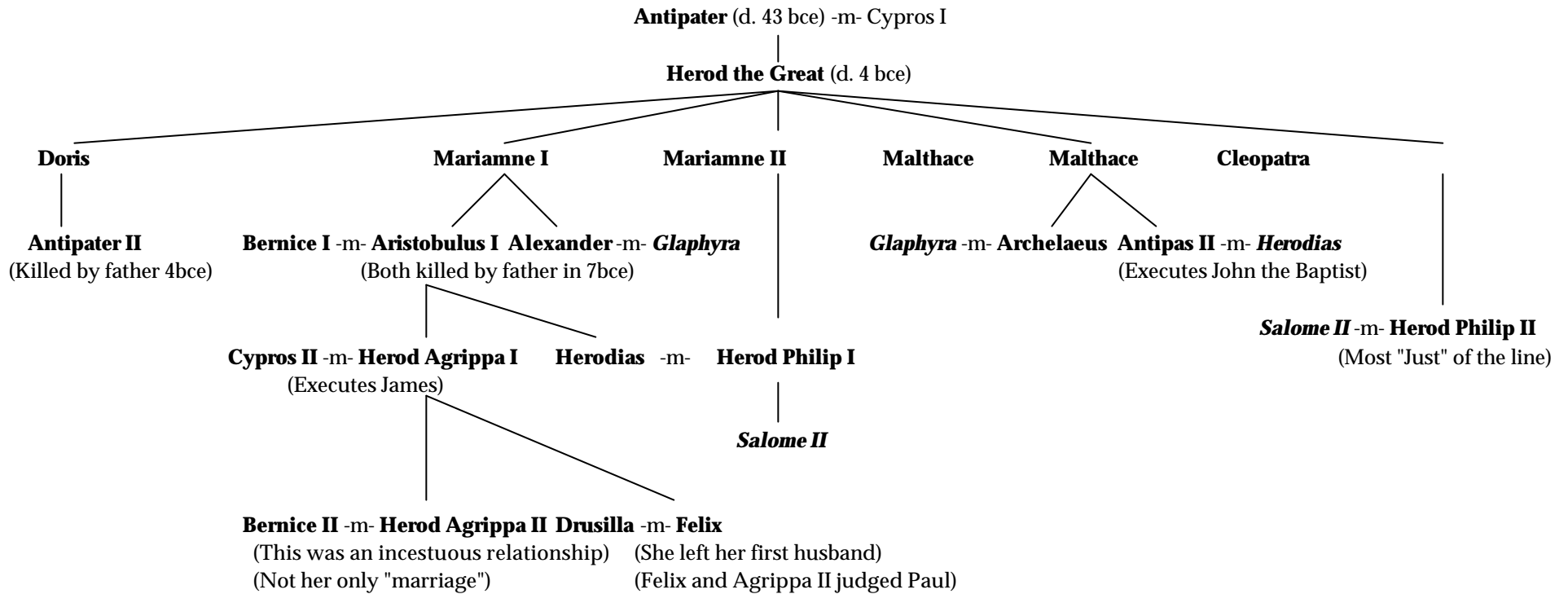
Would you trade your home for a residence like this? Remember, this is only one of many sites that Herod created for his own ease, enjoyment, and protection.

**Now do you wonder why he is usually subtitled, "the Great"?**

## Herod the Great: A Simplified Family Tree

Due to limitation of space, the lack of historic importance of Pallas, Phaedra, and Elpis, and the historic loss of two other wives (and children of the line) we will only deal with five of Herod's ten wives... Doris, Mariamne I, Mariamne II, Malthace, and Cleopatra (not the famous queen of Egypt).

("-m-" will denote a marriage and *names in italic* will denote that person is somewhere else on the page... multiple marriages with relatives.)



A brief look at the line of Herod fulfills the truth of the Word that sin does have its repercussions from generation to generation. The unchecked evil of this genius ripples through the royal line of Israel for over one hundred years. It influenced all of the events of the Gospel accounts and the history of the early church.

Incest, divorce, intrigue, assassination, fratricide...all became the mark of the line of Herod, the one called "great".

### BETWEEN THE LINES - Deeper Look Study Guide

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